

1999 ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE INDICATOR TRENDS

State Bureau of Substance Abuse Services

Executive Summary and Implications

This eighteenth annual report, pursuant to 46.973, and 14.24(9), Wis. Stats., presents five-year trends among 29 indicators of alcohol and other drug abuse problems in Wisconsin. The data are collected from state databases administered by the state Crime Laboratory, the Laboratory of Hygiene, Bureau of Health Information, Division of Children and Family Services, Uniform Crime Report, Department of Transportation, Department of Public Instruction, and Wisconsin and national surveys. There are 14 alcohol problem indicators, five drug problem indicators, and 10 youth problem indicators.

Among the 14 available alcohol problem indicators (which combine adult and youth data), nine were up in 1999 and five were down. The alcohol problem indicators showing increases over 1998 levels include deaths, drinking and driving, repeat OWI offenses, liquor law violations, alcohol beverage licenses granted, and alcohol consumption. Wisconsin continues to exceed national averages in the proportion of adults who are drinkers, heavy drinkers, episodic drinkers, and driving under the influence.

Two of the five drug problem indicators (which combine adult and youth data), drug-related deaths and recorded persons with full blown AIDS contracted through drug use, increased from 1998 to 1999. The principal drugs of abuse in Wisconsin are marijuana, cocaine, and heroin.

Eight of the ten available youth problem indicators are up including alcohol-related traffic crashes, driving under the influence, liquor law violations, alcohol and marijuana use, and drug arrests.

The following alcohol and drug problem indicators are moving in a positive direction (downward): hospitalizations, overall traffic crashes (combined adult and youth), domestic violations, and maltreatment of children.

Overall, ten (one-third) of the 29 alcohol and other drug abuse problem indicators presented in this report are moving in a positive direction (downward) with 19 (two-thirds) moving in a negative direction (upward). The abuse of drugs and alcohol creates serious health, public safety, economic, and social problems for Wisconsin residents and institutions. A continued challenge lies before policy makers, funding bodies, practitioners, and the general public, to work together to abate alcohol and other drug abuse problems. While raising the legal drinking age and tougher intoxicated driving laws have worked to reduce alcohol-related problems in some areas, there is a continuing need to increase coordinated efforts in Wisconsin.

Much like an economic indicators report, this report is used to track changes in alcohol and drug problems in Wisconsin. The information is useful in planning and evaluating statewide alcohol and drug abuse programs and initiatives. The report is presented to the State Council on Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse (statutory Council appointed by the Governor) and its subcommittees for their use in developing the Council's four-year strategic plan.

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Introduction

Pursuant to 46.973, and 14.24(9) Wis. Stats., the Department of Health and Family Services is required to collect and make available relevant statistical information to the Department, the State Council on Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse, and the general public. In response to this mandate and to many requests for data describing the extent of substance abuse and its effect on life in Wisconsin, this eighteenth annual report is prepared.

The report is divided into three principal sections. Within each section, statewide and national data are presented where available with accompanying interpretations. This report begins with trends for the principal alcohol-related problem indicators followed by illegal, mood altering drug indicators. Lastly, available trends describing alcohol and other drug abuse problems among youth are portrayed.

The data in this report deal with use, abuse, and dependency in relation to mood altering, habit forming and controlled substances including alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, tranquilizers, and the like. The statistics in this report were derived from data collected by the state Crime Laboratory, the Laboratory of Hygiene, Bureau of Health Information, Division of Children and Family Services, Uniform Crime Report, Department of Transportation, Department of Public Instruction, and Wisconsin and national surveys.

The charts in this report map the recent course of the leading and available alcohol and other drug abuse (AODA) indicators. Much like unemployment, housing starts, trade deficit, retail sales, household income, and the poverty rate are considered indicators of the strength or weakness in the economy, the indicators in this report describe AODA problems and the way they are moving in Wisconsin.

List of the Indicators

An alcohol or drug problem indicator is a statistic directly related to alcohol or drug use or abuse deemed important enough to be routinely gathered and reported by a state government agency. To put it simply, indicators are warning signs. The following is a list of the indicators tracked in this report:

- *Alcohol or Drug-Related Mortality*
- *Alcohol or Drug-Related Hospitalizations*
- *Alcohol-Related Traffic Fatalities, Injuries and Crashes*
- *Rate of Driving After Having Had Too Much To Drink*
- *Arrests for Operating a Motor Vehicle While Intoxicated (OWI)*
- *Percent of OWI Convictions That Are Repeat Offenses*
- *Liquor Law Violations*
- *Apparent Alcohol Consumption*

- *Liquor Licenses Granted*
- *Rate of Drinking, Episodic Drinking, and Heavy Drinking in the Past Month*
- *Injecting Drug User AIDS Cases*
- *Arrests for the Possession, Sale, or Manufacture of Controlled Substances*
- *Other Drugs Ranked*
- *Child Abuse or Neglect Cases With AODA Stressors*
- *Domestic Violations Related to Alcohol or Drugs*
- *Rate of Alcohol and Drug Use Among Teens*

Scaling Note

In order for there to be some comparability when viewing the graphs, all graphical data have been scaled using about a 1:10 ratio. That means, the highest value in the five years of data is divided by 10, and the result becomes the scale interval on the graph. This allows the reader to quickly compare the slopes among the graphs and see changes that are within or in excess of about 10 percent.

Summary of Alcohol-Related Problem Indicator Trends

Problems related to alcohol abuse are significant across the United States. Statistics from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) list alcoholism and drug abuse as the fourth most prevalent behavioral health problem (i.e. those that have behavior/life style causes) in the country behind hypertension, cigarette smoking, and heart disease (cancer was not considered a behavioral health problem in the study). The NIH statistics were analyzed and published by the Physician Leadership on National Drug Policy group at Brown University, Rhode Island. One only needs to open the daily newspaper to find accounts of the impact alcoholism and drug abuse have on communities. Here is a compelling example excerpted from the *Wisconsin State Journal*:

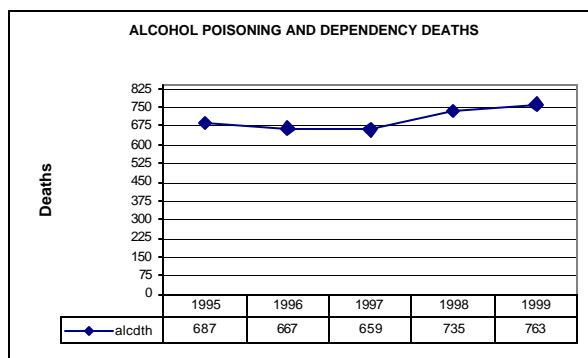
Beloit - A Beloit woman accused of endangering a toddler she was baby-sitting was charged this week with bail jumping and child neglect for an incident involving children. A 17-month old girl she was watching was found unconscious in the backyard pool. The woman had left the girl she was watching with a drunken friend while she went out. The woman was later found intoxicated and loading her own 2-year old child into the baby seat of her car. The woman had a blood alcohol level of 0.11 percent, which is considered legally intoxicated. She has two children ages 2 and 5.

The charts that follow present trends using available indicators connected to alcohol use. Some of the increase in reported deaths attributed to alcohol use occurring in the early 1990s was the result of improved identification and reporting among coroners and medical examiners. There have been increases in these reported deaths for the past two years. The steady decline in non-emergency hospitalizations is a result of the development of outpatient alternatives to the treatment of addictions.

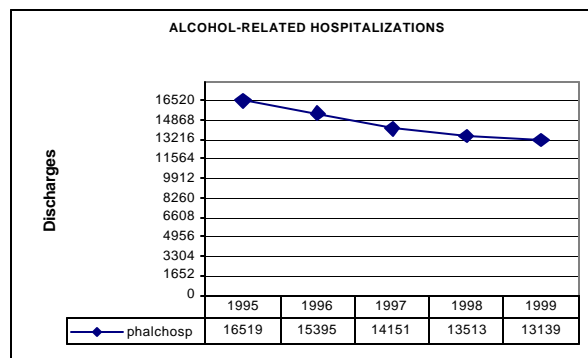
Traffic fatalities related to alcohol declined in 1999 by 4 percent as compared to 1998. Wisconsin compares favorably to the national average in this area. In 1996, the national average for alcohol-related traffic fatalities was 6.9 per 100,000 population and 40.9 percent of all traffic fatalities. In Wisconsin there were 6.0 alcohol-related traffic fatalities per 100,000 population and 38.9 percent of all fatalities. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources reported 25 snowmobile, 4 boating, and 1 ATV death related to alcohol in 1999. The total documented alcohol-related deaths in Wisconsin during 1999 from all reporting agencies were 1,356, up 2 percent from 1998.

There are over 1 million instances of driving while intoxicated (OWI) in Wisconsin each year. About 4 percent of these instances result in an arrest. The figures in this report show that the proportion of annual OWI convictions that are repeat offenses was up 8 points in 1999 due primarily to an extension of the time period used to calculate repeat offenses.

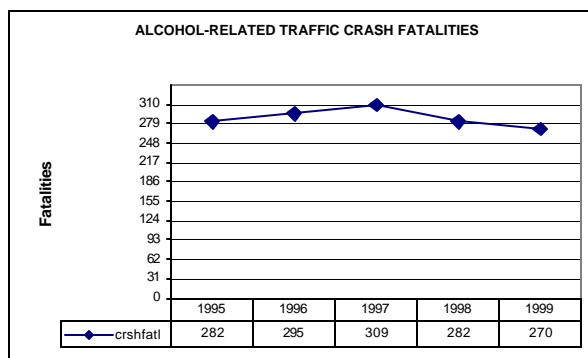
During the mid-1980s, Wisconsin enacted tougher intoxicated driving laws and raised the minimum drinking age to 19 and then to 21. These laws, the corresponding social message they conveyed, and other factors, had a significant impact causing an overall decline in alcohol consumption, retail alcohol beverage sales and outlets, and alcohol-related traffic crashes. While these are generally positive results, Wisconsin still ranks among the top five states in the country on at-risk alcohol consumption. This is supported by statistics from the Beer Institute (per capita beer consumption rank among states – Wisconsin is 3rd) and annual Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance System surveys. Enforcement of liquor laws continues to increase as evidenced by a 3 percent rise in violations. Following is a graphical presentation and explanation of the alcohol-related trends.



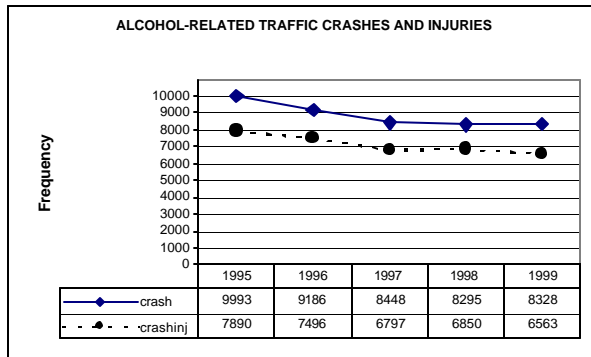
Documented alcohol-related deaths are obtained from the Bureau of Health Information and include causes listed on the death certificate such as liver cirrhosis, alcohol dependency, pancreatitis, etc. Alcohol deaths have risen two years in a row. The average age of death is 54.



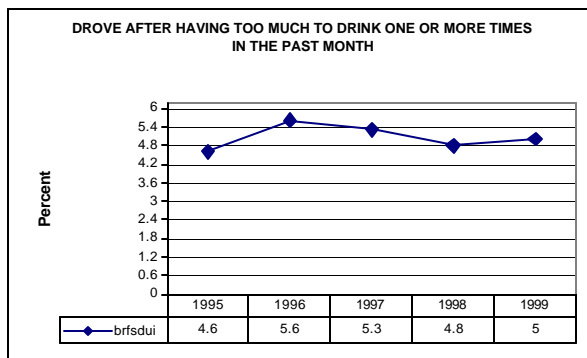
Alcohol-related hospitalizations are obtained from the Bureau of Health Information and include inpatient and detoxification (non-emergency) discharges coded as alcohol dependency, liver cirrhosis, etc. There is a continuing downward trend due to the utilization of cost-effective and least restrictive alternatives to inpatient treatment.



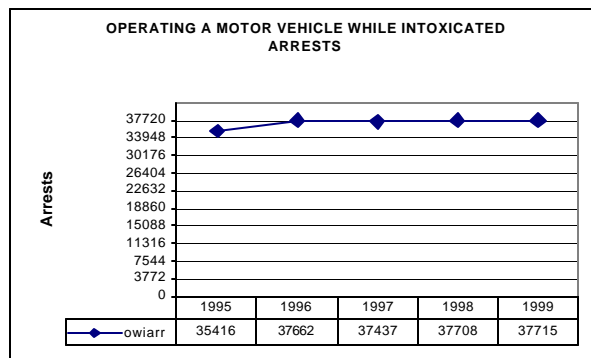
Alcohol-related traffic crash statistics are obtained from the Department of Transportation and include those events where the investigating officer perceived that the driver had been drinking. Fatalities are down for the second straight year. According to the National Highway and Traffic Safety Administration, 38 percent of United States traffic deaths are alcohol-related. In Wisconsin the rate is 42 percent.



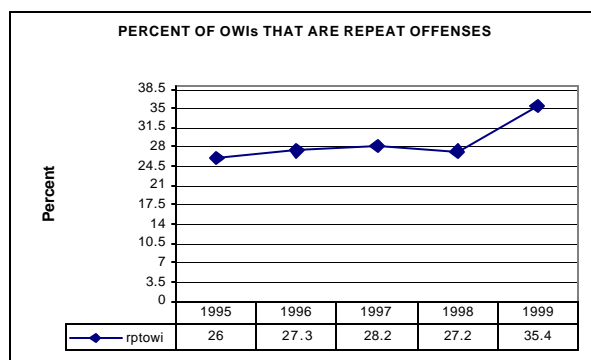
According to Wisconsin Department of Transportation estimates, alcohol-related crashes cost Wisconsin about \$450 million in 1999. There was a slight increase in crashes, but a decline in injuries in 1999.



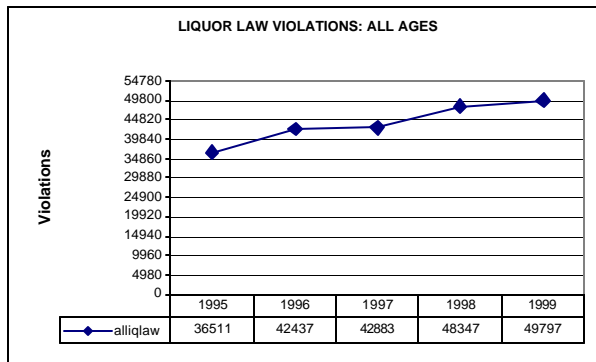
The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) survey is taken by the Bureau of Health Information each year on a representative sample of Wisconsin adult household residents. Similar surveys are taken in most states. There has been little change in the rate of drinking and driving in the past five years and Wisconsin ranks #2 in the country on this indicator.



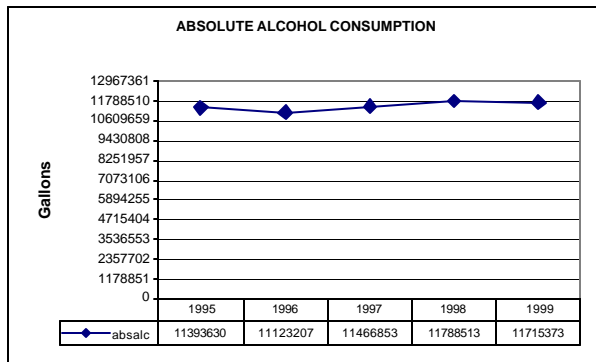
Obtained from the Office of Justice Assistance Uniform Crime Report, this indicator is defined as a person taken into legal custody and cited for intoxicated driving. The trend in OWI arrests has been somewhat steady since 1996.



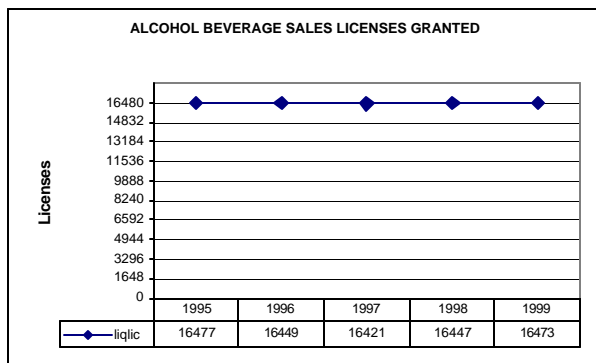
Obtained from the Department of Transportation, this represents the rate that repeat OWI convictions are of total OWI convictions. The increase from 1998 to 1999 is a result of a change in the time period used to count repeat violations. Previously, if a 1st or 2nd offense, only the past five years was used. Now, the count uses the past 10 years. The time period has also been lengthened to "lifetime" for 3rd or more offenses.



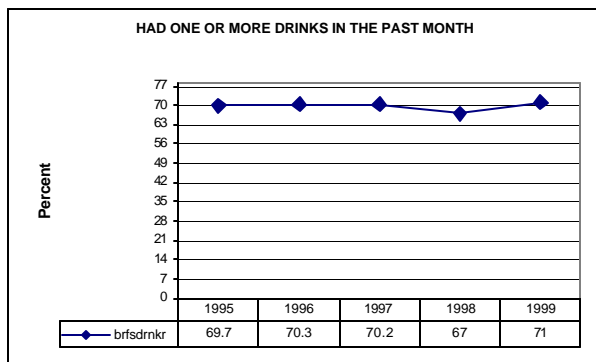
Obtained from the Office of Justice Assistance, this includes violations of state and local liquor laws such as underage possession, serving to a minor, fake ID, etc. There have been steady increases in the enforcement of liquor laws, particularly underage possession.



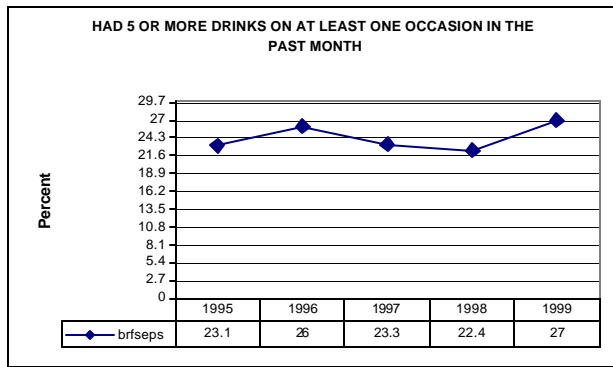
This indicator is taken from the Department of Revenue liquor tax receipts on the sale of beer, wine and spirits at the wholesale level and is a good proxy for alcohol consumption. Data are converted to absolute alcohol in gallons. There was a .6 percent decline in 1999. Wisconsin ranks 3rd among states on apparent consumption of beer (Beer Institute).



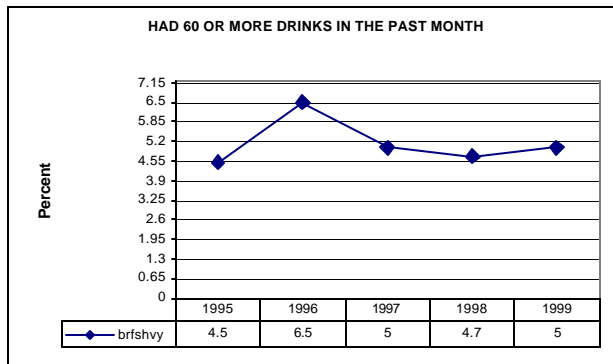
Obtained from the Department of Revenue, this represents licenses issued to establishments for the sale of any type of alcoholic beverage. Availability of alcohol is a good proxy for alcohol consumption. The number of liquor licenses has remained mostly unchanged in the past few years.



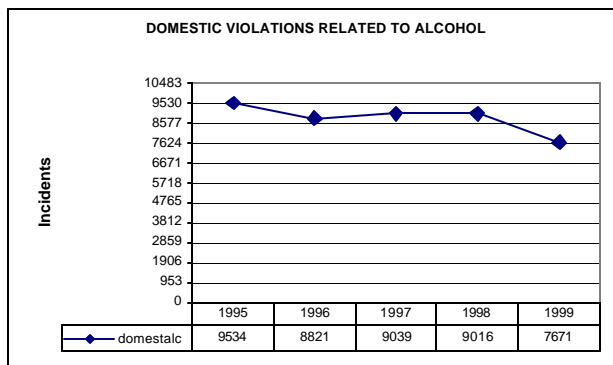
Obtained from the Wisconsin BRFSS survey, drinkers of alcoholic beverages are defined as those having one or more drinks in the past month. The national average for drinking is 54 percent of the adult population. Wisconsin ranks #1 among states on this indicator. There was a slight increase in the rate of drinking in 1999.



Also from the BRFSS, acute or episodic drinkers have had at least 5 drinks on an occasion of drinking in the past month. On the average, 5 drinks per occasion (4-hour period) could result in a blood alcohol content (BAC) of .05% for males and .10% for females. Wisconsin ranks highest among states on this indicator. The United States average is 15 percent. There was a slight increase over the past 5 years in Wisconsin.



This BRFSS survey item represents heavy drinking. Drinkers consuming 60 or more drinks per month are in the top 5 percent of the adult population as it pertains to consumption of alcoholic beverages. Wisconsin ranks 5th in the country on this indicator. There has been a slight increase in this indicator in the past 5 years.



Domestic Abuse Incidents/Violations Where Alcohol Was Involved are obtained from the Wisconsin Department of Justice, Domestic Abuse Incident Report (Office of Crime Victim Services). These are arrests for violations of no-contact orders, battery, disorderly conduct, damage to property, etc. The trend over the past five years is downward.

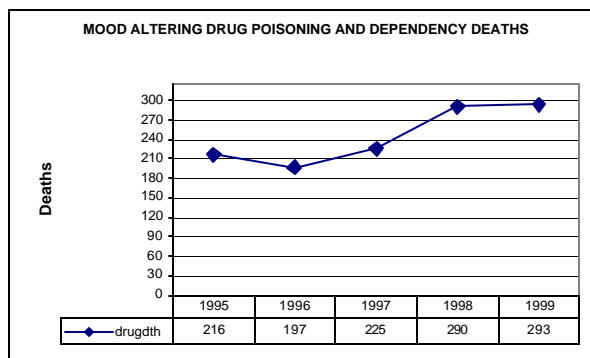
Summary of Mood Altering Drug-Related Problem Indicator Trends

This next set of charts plots available indicators connected to drug use. While reporting of drug deaths has improved since the early 1990s, drug-related deaths are steadily increasing. Non-emergency hospitalizations declined as a result of the development of outpatient alternatives to treatment. Intravenous drug users contracting AIDS rose slightly from 1998 to 1999.

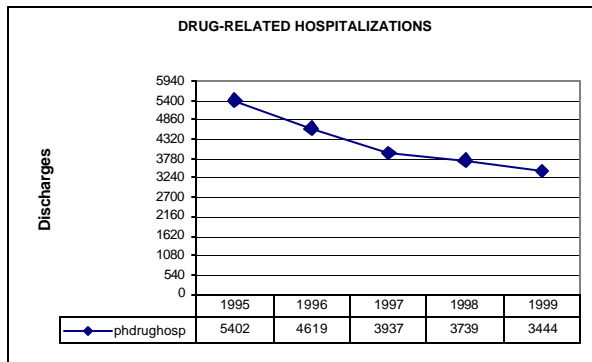
Much law enforcement attention has been focused on illegal drugs in Wisconsin since the early 1990s and is evident in the increased arrests. Arrests were down a little in 1999. Possession of marijuana is the leading category of arrests.

While alcohol problems outweigh drug problems 3 to 1 in Wisconsin, marijuana, cocaine, and opiates (heroin, narcotics) are the most abused drugs according to law enforcement drug seizures, Lab of Hygiene analyses of intoxicated drivers' blood samples, treatment admissions, and mortality data. Before a presentation of the drug trends, here is an example incident excerpted from the *Wisconsin State Journal*:

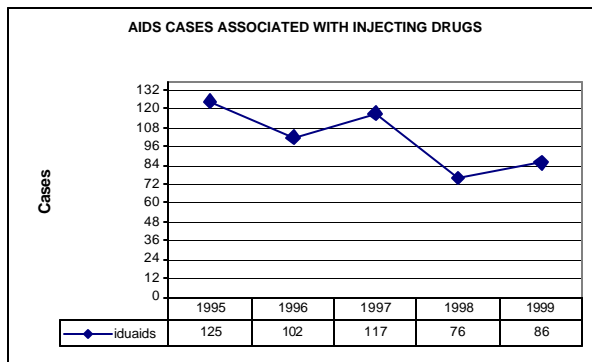
Madison - A convicted heroin dealer, blamed for supplying the drugs that killed a Middleton teen last year, was sentenced to 14 years in prison. He was convicted of seven felony drug charges. During the sentencing, the parents of the deceased teen talked about their son and his fight against heroin until his overdose. They expressed concern about the spread of youthful heroin use in Dane County. During sentencing, the heroin dealer said, "I know I made a major mistake with this arrest, but that doesn't make me a hard-core criminal. I want to be a father to my children. I feel I can make something of my life if I'm given the chance." He has had four previous incarcerations.



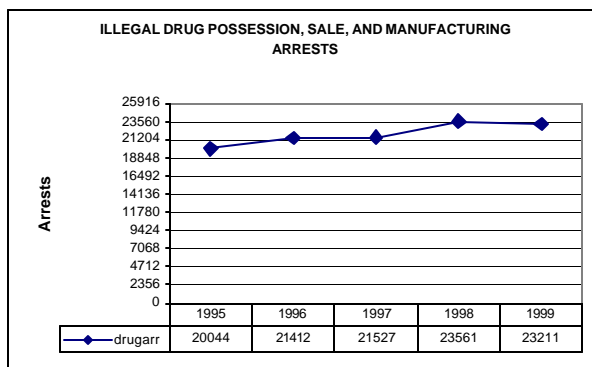
Mood altering drug deaths are obtained from the Bureau of Health Information and include causes listed on the death certificate such as hepatitis, drug dependency, adverse reactions, toxic dose, overdose, etc. Drug deaths have risen for the last three consecutive years. The average age of death is 46 years.



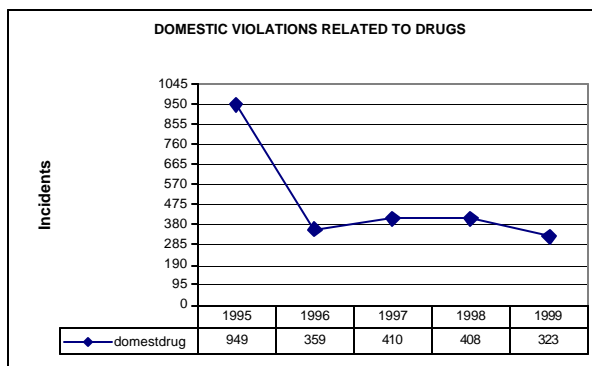
Drug-related hospitalizations are obtained from the Bureau of Health Information and include inpatient and detoxification (non-emergency) discharges coded as drug dependency, overdose, etc. There is a continuing downward trend due to the utilization of cost-effective and least restrictive alternatives to inpatient treatment.



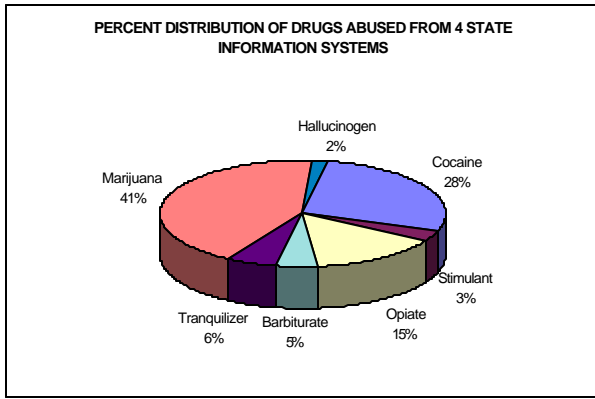
These cases include intravenous drug users (IDU), children whose mothers were IDUs, and children whose mothers had sexual contact with IDUs. These cases represent over one-fourth of all full blown AIDS cases. The figures, obtained from the Division of Public Health, show an overall downward trend.



According to a 2000 study by the Office of National Drug Control Policy, an estimated \$1.2 billion dollars is spent on illicit drugs each year in Wisconsin. These arrest data are obtained from the Office of Justice Assistance Uniform Crime Report and includes arrests for illegal activities associated with controlled substances including cocaine, speed, narcotics, marijuana, and hallucinogens. Arrests declined slightly in 1999 after 5 years of increases.



Domestic Abuse Incidents/Violations Where Drugs Were Involved are obtained from the Wisconsin Department of Justice, Domestic Abuse Incident Report (Office of Crime Victim Services). These are arrests for violations of no-contact orders, battery, disorderly conduct, damage to property, etc. The trend over the past five years is downward.



What are the most abused drugs? While alcohol problems outweigh drug problems 3 to 1 in Wisconsin, other drugs of abuse can be ranked in importance by looking at their relative occurrence among various data sources. This chart is an average of four independent sources of data, namely, state Crime Lab drug seizures, State Lab of Hygiene analyses of intoxicated driver blood samples, mortality, and publicly supported treatment admissions. Apart from alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, and opiates (in that order) are the most abused drugs in Wisconsin today.

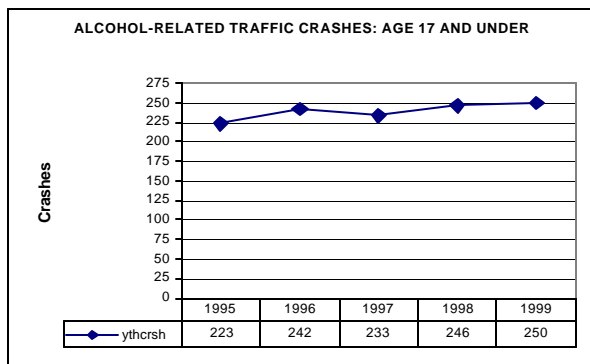
Summary of Youth Trends

Most alcohol-related youth trends reflect the enactment of tough intoxicated driving and underage alcohol possession laws along with increased law enforcement attention in these areas. As a result, Department of Public Instruction YRBS survey data show rates of drinking among youth to be fairly stable, while the opposite is occurring for marijuana use. Use of both alcohol and marijuana is occurring at an earlier age. Research has demonstrated that the younger people start using alcohol or other drugs, the greater the risk of problems later in life. The following excerpted article was published recently by the Wisconsin State Journal newspaper:

MARIJUANA A FACTOR IN FATALITIES

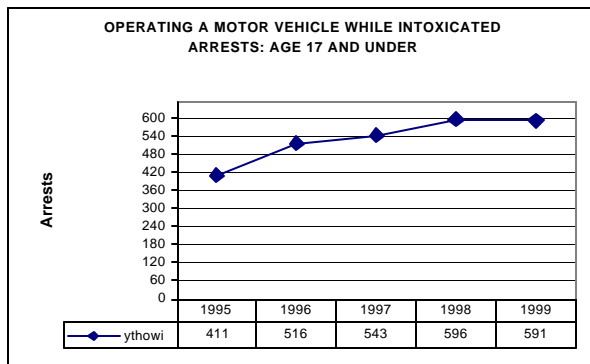
Tests indicate marijuana was in the blood of all four Kaukauna High School students killed in a traffic crash, the Calumet County Sheriff's Department says. A spokesperson for the Department said all the victims tested positive for THC, the chief intoxicant in marijuana.

The steady increase in drug arrests among youth has mixed explanations. While law enforcement attention to illegal drugs is up overall, the increase in marijuana use among youth may also be contributing to the increase in drug arrests. Reports of child maltreatment related to alcohol and drugs continue to track downward.



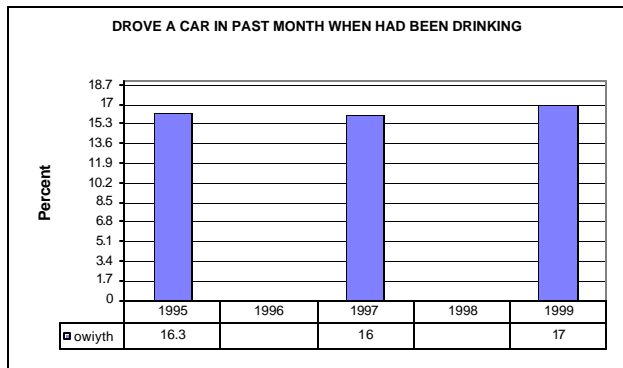
There has been a 12 percent increase in teen alcohol-related traffic crashes in the past 5 years.

Source: Dept. of Transportation

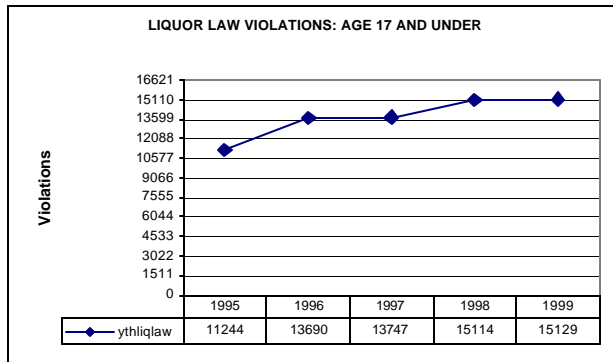


Enforcement of teen intoxicated driving declined slightly in 1999 after 5 years of increases.

Source: Dept. of Transportation

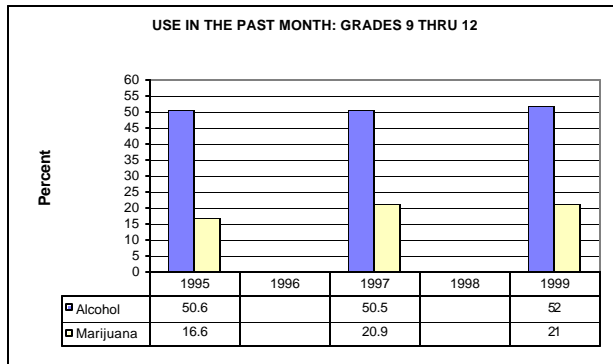


The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) is taken by the Department of Public Instruction every 2 years on a representative sample of Wisconsin students in grades 9-12. Similar surveys are taken in most states. There is a slight increase in drinking and driving among youth. The national average for this indicator in 1999 is 13 percent.

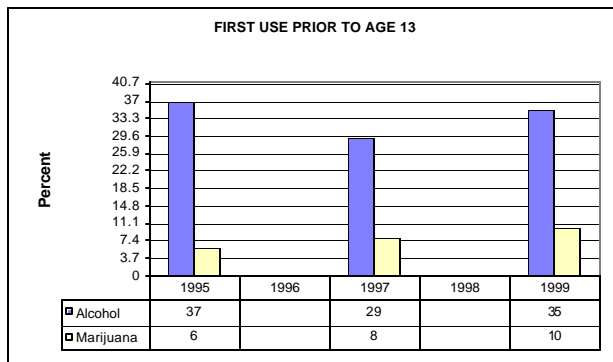


Citations for underage liquor law violations remained steady in 1999 after increases in the previous 5 years.

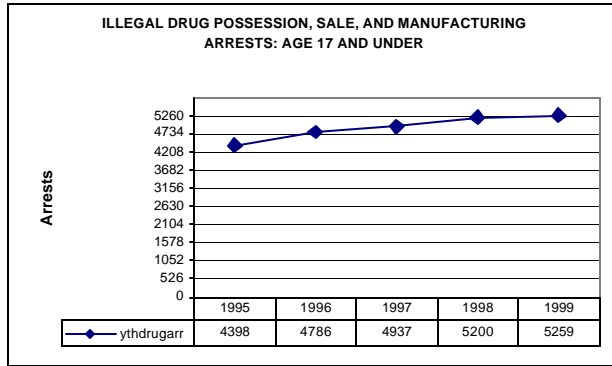
Source: Office of Justice Assistance



The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) is taken by the Department of Public Instruction every 2 years on a representative sample of Wisconsin students in grades 9-12. Similar surveys are taken in most states. Increases in use have occurred over the past 5 years. The national average in 1999 is 50 percent and 27 percent for alcohol and marijuana respectively.

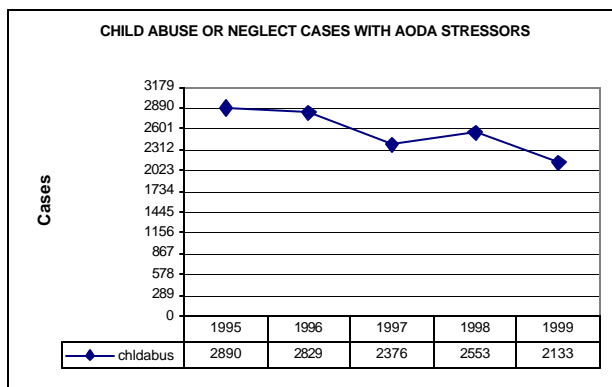


Research has demonstrated that the younger people start using alcohol or other drugs, the greater the risk of problems later in life. Also taken from the YRBS survey, youth are experimenting with marijuana at a younger age (grade 8 or earlier).



Teen arrests for possession or sale of illegal drugs continue to increase.

Source: Office of Justice Assistance



Children from abusive or neglectful family situations have a higher risk of developing substance abuse problems later in life. Data on child maltreatment is submitted to the state Division of Children and Family Services by county child protection agencies. The data counts cases where parental abuse or neglect was substantiated and was related to the parent's use of alcohol or other drugs. These AODA cases represent 18 percent of all child abuse cases. Reported cases declined 16 percent in 1999.

Were the changes significant statistically or simply higher or lower?

A decision was made to model the report after similar reports on economic activity in Wisconsin by DWD. The purpose is to simply present the trends so that the reader can get a sense of whether or not the indicator is going up, down, or stable. The graphs have also been scaled so that changes from one horizontal line to another represent 10 percent increases or decreases. Statistical significance with most of the indicators (since they are not from sample surveys) would not be a customary approach.

Graphics are all too small for reading ease.

The graphics are intended to be compact. It was intended that the reader's eye examine the course of the plotted line. The text to the right of the graph provides an explanation. In the current draft, the font for the vertical axis numbers has been increased.

Is there a need to seek permission from the Wisconsin State Journal for the excerpted articles?

The text used are excerpts not entire articles. Permission is not necessary as long as WSJ is credited.